Home Adaptations for Disabled People

Good Practice Case Study: Middlesbrough
Facts about the area

**Locality:** Middlesbrough, North East England

**Type of authority:** Borough Council

**Population:** 142,000

**Description:** This area developed in the 19th century around the steel industry and has a legacy of poor quality terraced housing with pockets of deprivation. There are high levels of unemployment and low incomes.

**Health and Disability:** Life expectancy at birth in Middlesbrough is lower than the average for the North East and for England as a whole. Levels of child poverty are high. There are high numbers of emergency hospital admissions mirroring the pattern of deprivation across the town. Outmigration has led to a rapidly ageing population and 75% of people aged over 65 known to social care have a physical disability.

Good practice illustrates:

- Lean and cost effective service
- Effective joint working across housing, social care and health
- A rapid response ‘home from hospital’ service
Home adaptations service at a glance

Middlesbrough Staying Put covers the town of Middlesbrough and the surrounding villages. The local council managed agency is based within the Adult Social Care Department of Middlesbrough Borough Council. The agency has been in existence for over 20 years and has continued to evolve to meet the needs of the local population. With the Care Act and the development of the Better Care Fund the service is now focussed on reducing demands on accident and emergency services and facilitating rapid hospital discharge. They have a member of staff embedded in the hospital to ensure people can return home to a safe environment as quickly as possible.

The total DFG budget for 2014/15 is £1,134,000 (Central government contribution £760,363 LA contribution £373,637). Within the Better Care Fund for 2015/16 there is an allocation of £885,000 – a 15% increase. The local transfer housing association, Erimus, has a separate £400,000 annual budget for adaptations and has their own seconded OT. Most other housing associations pay 40-50% towards the DFG and there are Service Level Agreements for Middlesbrough Staying Put to provide the adaptations.
The team consists of: team leader, support and development officer, housing options officer, caseworker, hospital officer, two technical officers, progress co-ordinator and two administrative staff.

The Staying Put agency service is based in Adult Social Care and the agency is seen as a single point of access working alongside the occupational therapy (OT) service to manage home adaptations carried out with DFGs. Although there is a short wait for the OT there is no waiting list for a DFG and people referred by the OTs get an appointment made immediately. There is a virtually paperless system with simplified forms and ‘passporting’ for people who are on benefits, which provides a more streamlined service.

The agency also operates:

**Handyperson Service - Middlesbrough Mobile Adapt & Mend Service (MMAMS):**

There is an award winning effective handypersons team of five staff who all have disabilities themselves and are trained as trusted assessors. One person is profoundly deaf which has proved to be a positive benefit when working with service users with hearing impairments. Their service undertakes 'standard' handyperson tasks, such as fitting grab-rails, keysafes and doing minor repairs, and also install telecare and pro-actively look for trips and falls hazards.

**Housing Options Info & Advice Service:**

There is a housing & care options info & advice service funded by DCLG. It is difficult to find ways to help people who are owner occupier’s living in unsuitable homes to move, as people have very little equity as property prices are so low and there is a very limited supply of alternative housing. It is sometimes easier to enable people to move if they are willing to consider social housing, but most want to remain in their existing homes. The housing options officer ensures that if people do choose or have to stay put, their homes are made safer, warmer and more secure and they get the care and financial help that they need.
The Staying Put agency offers small grants for the repair and replacement of heating systems aimed at the most vulnerable households including older people, those with disabilities and families with young or disabled children. They also offer additional services to keep people warm and safe including: snow clearance & gritting, the provision of warm clothing (fleeces, gloves, hats, and body warmers) and offer microwaves to people who require meals on wheels because they are unable to use their cooker because of age or disability. All of these initiatives contribute to the borough’s falls prevention and nutrition agenda.

**TrustMark Accredited Contractors:**

The agency manages a list of 32 contractors all with Trustmark Accreditation and who encompass a range of skills. In addition the agency has developed its own ‘Code of Conduct’ and ‘Contractor Compliance and Performance’ criteria to ensure contractors meet the expected standard. By supporting local builders the agency is also contributing to the local economy.

**Home Loans and Private Works:**

The agency offers a fee-paying service for people needing adaptations and repair work who are able to pay out of their own resources. They have access to limited amount of loan finance for people who are unable to access a commercial loan to make their homes decent and are beginning to recycle loans made in the past. The agency tries to ensure that as many people as possible know about their service by talking to GPs, speaking on the local radio, talking to older person’s groups and giving out leaflets. They are aiming to expand this side of the service to ensure the long term financial viability of the agency.
Hospital Discharge Service

Middlesbrough Staying Put strengthened its hospital discharge service in 2014 by introducing a new hospital-based Telecare & Support Officer. Within the first 3 months they assisted more than 300 patients by offering advice, support and practical assistance. They support the hospital’s case management and social work teams and have become an essential part of the discharge planning process. As they are based in the hospital they can respond immediately - especially when there is a bed crisis. The benefits of the service include:

- Proactively seek referrals off wards
- Being in the hospital to discuss the help they can offer with patients
- Ability to provide info & advice immediately to staff and patients
- Saving time and resources of hospital staff
- Faster discharge of patients to a safe home environment
- Minor adaptations done quickly
- Able to provide telecare
- Liaison with OT’s to ensure rapid progress of adaptations
- Assisting patients with the DFG process
- Signposting to other services.
- Enabling patients to return to a safe home reduces re-admissions
- Provides best possible care for patients
- High levels of patient satisfaction with the service

The person employed in this post had previously worked in the call centre and knew all the people involved in delivering services in the local authority. This has made it easier for them to provide a very effective service. In November and December 2014 alone they dealt with 92 telecare referrals, 38 minor works referrals, 13 boiler repairs, 16 requests to WRVS and one major adaptation. Staying Put are looking at the Care Act requirements for a 24/7 service and considering how the handyperson service could deliver this during the next financial year.
What we’ve achieved:

The purpose of the Agency is to make a positive difference within the Middlesbrough area by improving the health, well-being and quality of life for older, vulnerable and disabled people, helping them to continue to live independently, comfortably and safely in their home environment. The hospital discharge service is an important part of that process and is already delivering more than we had hoped. We are continuing to widen the range of services on offer to enable as many people as possible remain independent in their own homes.
Mrs A

Mrs A was in her mid-50’s when she fell and broke her neck and became a patient in the spinal injuries unit at James Cook Hospital. The Staying Put agency worked with the hospital to plan her discharge. Mrs A was not eligible for financial assistance but she decide to use the agency’s services to manage the major adaptations works to her home and facilitate an earlier discharge date. The amount of works required was substantial and included; installing a level access shower and through floor lift; repaving at the front of house; creating level access to the rear and putting in a patio. The level access shower and through floor lift were installed as a priority to enable Mrs A to be discharged home. The other work was carried out when she was at home and this allowed her to have an input into the design and materials used.